

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SANTO 03697 01 OF 02 071906Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /076 W
-----052170 071911Z /41

O R 071700Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5228
INFO AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTO DOMINGO 3697

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, DR
SUBJECT: THE DECISION IS DUE SOON

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 3599

1. THE COUNTRY ENTERS ANOTHER WEEKEND STILL WAITING FOR THE
CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE) TO END THE PROTRACTED SUSPENSE
BY DECIDING, FINALLY, WHO WON THE MAY 16 NATIONAL ELECTION.

2. THE MULTIPLE PRESSURES ON THE BOARD BY THE OFFICIAL
REFORMISTA PARTY (PR), WHICH FOR THE PAST SEVEN WEEKS HAS
TENACIOUSLY CHALLENGED THE PROVISIONAL VOTE-COUNT THAT GAVE
VICTORY TO THE OPPOSITION PARTIDO REVOLUCIONARIO DOMINICANO
(PRD), SEEMED TO PETER OUT AT THE FINAL JCE HEARING ON ITS
CHALLENGES JULY 4. MARINO (VINCHO) CASTILLO, THE LAWYER
LEADING THE REFORMISTAS' ATTACK ON THE JCE'S UNOFFICIAL TALLY
SHOWED UNACCUSTOMED RESERVE AT THE END OF THE BOARD'S PUBLIC
AUDIENCES, EVEN WHILE REITERATING HIS PARTY'S CALL FOR A RERUN
OF MAY 16.

3. THE JCE, HOWEVER, HAS REMAINED UNDER INTENSE PUBLIC
SCRUTINY OF ITS EVERY MOVE AND COMMENT AS IT BEGAN MEETING
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SANTO 03697 01 OF 02 071906Z

IN SECRET JULY 5 TO FRAME ITS DECISION. THE CAPITAL'S
NEWSPAPERS HAVE MAINTAINED THEMSELVES ALERT TO DENOUNCE ANYTHING
ITS SLEUTHS CAN UNCOVER SUGGESTING THE ELECTORAL BODY IS BEING
SUBORNED OR INTIMIDATED BY THE REFORMISTAS. THE MEDIA PRESSURES
HAVE PROMPTED ACTING JCE CHAIRMAN VARGAS SUBERVI TO
ISSUE ALMOST DAILY REASSURANCES TO THE PUBLIC THAT HE
AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE HONORABLE MEN WHO WILL DO

THEIR DUTY ACCORDING TO THE LAW. PROMISING A "HISTORIC AND TRANSCENDANT" DECISION "SOON," SUBERVI POINTED OUT THAT HIS CONSCIENCE WASN'T THE ONLY GUARANTEE THE PEOPLE HAD; "MY CHILDREN HAVE TO LIVE HERE TOO," HE SAID.

4. EVEN AS THE BOARD MET IN PRIVATE CONCLAVE JULY 5, THE CAPITAL'S NEWSPAPERS WERE MANIFESTING THEIR VIGILANCE

WITH STORIES THAT REFORMISTA EFFORTS TO GET CONGRESS TO ANNUL THE RESULTS OF MAY 16 AND EXTEND BALAGUER'S TERM BY TWO YEARS (REFTEL) WERE GAINING MOMENTUM THAT REFORMISTA LAWYERS ARGUING THEIR CASE BEFORE THE JCE HAD BEEN MEETING PRIVATELY WITH BOARD PRESIDENT VARGAS SUBERVI; THAT THE REFORMISTAS WERE ORGANIZING FOR A

RE-RUN OF THE ELECTION ON AUGUST 2; THAT SUBERVI HAD ORDERED THE FIRING OF 300 JCE EMPLOYEES AND THE REOPENING OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION LISTS SO "NEW" VOTERS COULD BE ENROLLED; ETC.

5. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH MEANWHILE HAS CONTINUED ITS PRESSURES ON THE BOARD (AND THE GOVERNMENT) TO "RESPECT THE POPULAR WILL." BISHOP JUAN ANTONIO FLORES OF LA VEGA, BELIEVED TO BE THE MOST LIBERAL OF THE DOMINICAN EPISCOPATE, CALLED ON BALAGUER AND THE ARMED FORCES TO RETURN "PEACE AND CALM" TO THE DOMINICAN PEOPLE WHO

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SANTO 03697 01 OF 02 071906Z

HAVE SO PRUDENTLY AWAITED THE OFFICIAL RESULTS OF THEIR VOTES MAY 16. BROADCASTING OVER THE CHURCH NETWORK (RADIO SANTA MARIA), THE RESPECTED FLORES SAID THE PEOPLE ARE QUITE ALERT TO THE POSSIBILITY THAT "DILATORY TACTICS" COULD PRODUCE SERIOUS DISORDERS IN DOMINICAN LIFE. SUCH STATEMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICALLY IMPORTANT CIBAO VALLEY, ARE VIEWED HERE AS STRONG POLITICAL MEDICINE. EMBOFFS ARE AWARE THAT ANOTHER CIBAO RELIGIOUS FIGURE, MSGR. AGRIPINO NUNEZ, RECTOR OF THE PRESTIGIOUS MADRE Y MAESTRA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, IS ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN WORKING OUT STRATEGY IN THE PRESENT CRISIS WITH GUZMAN AND THE REST OF THE PRD LEADERSHIP AND IS KEEPING THE PAPAL NUNCIO, GIOVANNI GRAVELLI, ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS.

6. THE PRD LEADERSHIP, CLOSELY MONITORING THE MANEUVERS OF THE REFORMISTAS, NOW BELIEVES THAT THE JCE HAS FINALLY SUCCUMBED TO THE NATIONWIDE DEMAND FOR CERTIFICATION OF GUZMAN AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT, BUT THAT IT IS CASTING ABOUT FOR A PRETEXT ON WHICH TO BASE A SOLOMONIC DECISION THAT GIVES THE REFORMISTAS A SOP FOR ALL THEIR EFFORTS. AS PRD LEADERS NOW SEE IT, THE WAY OUT

FOR THE BOARD IS TO GIVE CONTROL OF THE SENATE TO THE GOVERNMENT PARTY SIMPLY BY "RECOUNTING" CLOSE PRD VICTORIES IN THREE PROVINCES. THE PRD FEELS VINCHO CASTILLO HAS TALKED THE REFORMISTAS INTO A CORNER WITH HIS INSISTENT DEMANDS FOR "COMPLEMENTARY" ELECTIONS, SINCE IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED THAT THEY WOULD BE OVERWHELMED IN ANY HONEST ELECTION RE-RUNS; AND IT WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE, UNDER EXISTING ELECTORAL SAFEGUARDS, TO RIG THEM IN ADVANCE. HENCE THE SIMPLICITY OF A BOARD "RECOUNT" THAT DECLARES THE REFORMISTAS VICTORS IN THREE PROVINCES WHICH PROVISIONALLY HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE PRD. THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IS STILL NOT AGREED ON HOW TO REACT TO SUCH AN OUTCOME. SOME OF ITS LEADERS, INCLUDING GUZMAN, ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FATE OF HIS
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PAGE 04 SANTO 03697 01 OF 02 071906Z

PROGRAM IS THE OPPOSITION CONTROLS THE SENATE; OTHERS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT, BELIEVING THAT ONCE THEY HOLD EXECUTIVE POWER, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO EXERT SUFFICIENT LEVERAGE TO MAKE LEGISLATIVE PROBLEMS MANAGEABLE.

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PAGE 01 SANTO 03697 02 OF 02 071913Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTO DOMINGO 3697

7. THE PRD AT THIS JUNCTURE CAN ONLY CONSIDER THE OPTIONS AND WAIT FOR THE BOARD'S RULING. THE HIATUS HAS HINDERED THEIR TRANSITION AND INAUGURATION PLANS. WHILE GUZMAN AND MAJLUTA ARE NOW ALMOST UNIVERSALLY REFERRED TO

AS PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT, THEY HAVE NO AUTHORITY AND MUST DEFER ACTION TO CONTINUE PLANNING. ANOTHER INHIBITION FOR GUZMAN IS THE NEED FOR SECRECY, PARTICULARLY IN HIS SELECTIONS FOR THE CABINET AND OTHER KEY GOVERNMENT JOBS; PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF HIS CHOICES COULD SET OFF TUMULTS IN HIS HYPERSENSITIVE PARTY, WHICH HAS AWAITED THE FRUITS OF POWER FOR 15 YEARS.

10. AFTER 50 DAYS OF WAITING FOR THE JCE, THE PR'S LEGAL CHALLENGE, WHICH ONCE LOOKED SO FORMIDABLE, IS NOW SEEN AS A FORLORN HOPE. THE REFORMISTA DIE-HARDS, NOTABLY AMONG THE PALACE OLD GUARD AND THE VINCHO GROUP, CONTINUE TO TALK OF OVERTURNING ELECTION RESULTS ACROSS THE BOARD, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT'S RADIO-TV NETWORK SPEWS DAILY STREAMS OF HATE AND FEAR FROM RAFAEL BONILLA AYBAR AND HIS ILK. BUT THE NATIONAL MOOD, EVIDENT AMONG THE CROSS-SECTION OF POLITICALLY ATTUNED DOMINICANS AT THE EMBASSY'S FOURTH OF JULY RECEPTION, IS ONE OF CAUTIOUSLY GROWING OPTIMISM THAT EVERYTHING NOW IS GOING CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SANTO 03697 02 OF 02 071913Z

TO WORK OUT FOR THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE DOMINICAN PEOPLE. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THE END OF THE PROCESS IS AT HAND; SUBERBI, PESTERED BY INSISTENT REPORTERS TO SET THE DATE, HAS PROMISED A DECISION BY "NEXT WEEK." WE HAVE OTHER INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, THAT IT COULD COME TODAY OR TOMORROW.
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